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SOUTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
VOLUME: 3 ISSUE: 2 2020

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From Our State Director

Unprecedented Times

The great Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy." We have certainly come through some challenging times this year. As our world was turned upside down by a microscopic organism called COVID-19, which brought the whole world to its knees, we have been forced to overcome. But overcome we have.



Billy Keels

As schools closed, our teachers have had to find ways to teach students through eLearning. Our students had to show the discipline in maintaining their studies with all of the distractions at home. And FFA Advisors have had to provide leadership opportunities for their students through innovative means.

As the governor issued stay-at-home orders and travel was limited, our FFA Association leadership had to find ways to reach out to our students across the state. Our state officer team had the misfortune of serving at a time which caused them to miss out on some key parts of their year of service, not the least of which is the ability to host a state convention. But rather than complain, they worked hard to provide motivation and services online for FFA members across the state. They will also go down as, what we hope will be, the only officer team in South Carolina history to conduct a virtual FFA convention.

And through it all, the one thing that I have noticed most is, no complaining. Everyone understands what we must do and the support felt from teachers and students alike is uplifting. A common theme that has echoed across the land is "we are all in this together." A statement that has proven to be so true among those involved in the FFA and agricultural education.

It has been an unprecedented year, indeed. And as we look back on this year in years to come, we will know that we have the ability to overcome and through it all we will have built character and perseverance. For as Hellen Keller, who was both deaf and blind, noted, "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved."

Stay Connected

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Message from the State Officers

By Cooper Brown

The State Officer team wanted to reach out to our members and tell all of you that we miss seeing your faces, hearing your stories and, most of all, seeing your blue jackets. However, we are pleased to host the very first Virtual South Carolina FFA State Convention! A virtual convention just proves that there is more than one way to get together and have some fun.

Our officer team wants you to know that we understand that these are difficult times to experience. Remember that we are always available to talk during these hard times and staying strong right beside you all. We cannot wait to see each and every one of you again soon! Stay safe, South Carolina FFA!



Using Social Media to Connect with SC FFA Members

By Sydney Gambrell

During our time away from each other, the State Officer team hopped on several social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to connect with our members. Each week, our members have had the chance to share their favorite FFA memories and experiences with us via social media. Our officer team felt it was extremely important to provide some light during this time of uncertainty, and this is why we began our weekly Social Media Takeover. On Mondays, students, advisors and supporters had the opportunity to join State Vice President Cooper Brown for an episode of Cooking with Cooper. Tuesdays followed with an episode of Sketching with Sydney where our state secretary shared her artistic skills. Virginia Kackley and Matthew Brownlee, two of our state vice presidents, challenged FFA members to compete in Wacky Wednesday Challenges at home and to Take in The Outdoors on Thursdays. Friday's episodes were brought by State President Kylie Cathcart, where she shared her FFA story and inspired members to do the same. Last but certainly not least, State Vice President



Jake Faulkner wrapped up each week with a silly joke on each episode of Jokes with Jake. We have loved having the opportunity to reach and connect with our members to hear their stories, see their creations and feel their passions for the FFA.

LEGISLATORS APPRECIATION DAY DRAWS A RECORD CROWD

By Jillian Lash

On a beautiful day, South Carolina agricultural education students attended the annual SC FFA-sponsored State Legislators Appreciation Day Ceremony on Feb. 26. The students and their FFA advisors began the day by visiting with state senators and representatives from their home districts to thank them for their support of agriculture and education in South Carolina.



SC FFA Officers with Sen. Paul Campbell, Chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

Following the visits with local legislators, over 1,000 FFA members and advisors from throughout the state gathered on the steps of the state capitol for a recognition ceremony. The event began with FFA State President Kylie Cathcart welcoming all FFA members and guests. The group was led in prayer by Cooper Brown, state vice president, and heard a wonderful rendition of the national anthem by McBee FFA member Kylee Jackson and members of the McBee High School band.

Molly Spearman, state superintendent of education, applauded the FFA organization for their hard work and concern for the welfare of the community. She also stated that she is a firm believer in career and technical education and how students learn citizenship and leadership in classes such as agricultural education.

Superintendent Spearman presented the Governor's Proclamation to the State FFA Officers on behalf of Governor McMaster in recognition of National FFA Week Feb. 22-29, 2020.

State Representative David Hiott, of Pickens County, chairman of the House Agriculture, Natural Resources &



Superintendent Molly Spearman presents a Governor's Proclamation recognizing National FFA Week during the Legislative Appreciation Day Ceremony.



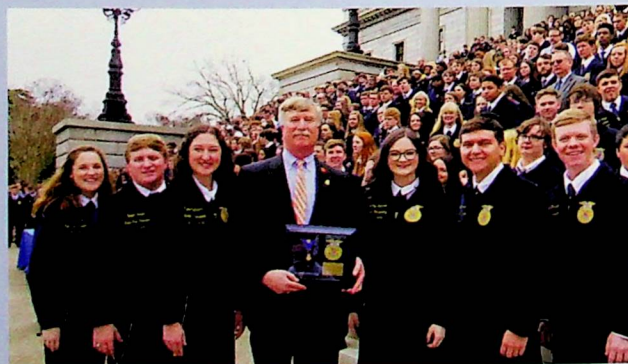
Rep. David Hiott, Chairman of the House Agriculture present a Joint Resolution recognizing National FFA Week during the Legislative Appreciation Day Ceremony.

Environmental Affairs Committee, gave remarks to the FFA members in attendance and presented a Resolution of Recognition and Commendation to the State FFA Officers on behalf of all the members of the S.C. General Assembly.

Clemson Public Service and Agriculture Vice-president, Dr. George Askew was presented the Honorary American Degree on behalf of the National FFA Organization. This prestigious award is reserved for those individuals who have gone beyond the call of duty to promote and support the mission of the FFA at the local, state and national levels. This prestigious award is considered to be among the top agricultural awards available in America.

The week of George Washington's birthday was designated as National FFA Week in 1947 at a National FFA Board of Directors meeting. FFA Week always runs from Saturday to Saturday and encompasses Washington's Birthday.

The FFA positively influences the young people of America by developing character and leadership skills and preparing members for successful careers. FFA members are the leaders of tomorrow. Through agricultural education and hands-on learning, FFA members are preparing for more than 300 career opportunities in the food, fiber and natural resources industries of agriculture. With more than 700,000 members, the organization has a history of service and a legacy of leadership.



Dr. George Askew, Clemson University Vice-President for Public Service and Agriculture, is presented is Honorary American FFA Degree by the SC FFA Officer Team.

Historic 93rd South Carolina FFA Convention Held Virtually

By Jillian Lash

The South Carolina FFA Convention has always been an exciting event for FFA members, advisors and agriculturalists. Even a virtual convention can still be an exciting and unique format to present awards, recognize FFA members for their outstanding accomplishments and present the state officers' retiring addresses.

Highlights of the 93rd FFA Convention on June 9-11:

- **June 9** — The First General Session at 6:30 p.m. with a welcome from the National FFA Advisor, James Woodard, recognition of national chapter and scholarship winners, and Region 4 Vice President Virginia Kackley's retiring address.
- **June 10** — A workshop presented by a National FFA Officer followed by two additional student workshops. The Second General Session includes the retiring address of Region 2 Vice President Matthew Brownlee, introduction of State Officer Candidates, the TAGGED presentation and the State Degree Ceremony. The Third General Session includes the FFA Stars Over South Carolina, the retiring addresses of Region 3 Vice President Jake Faulkner and Region 4 Vice President Cooper Brown, and a keynote speaker.
- **June 11** — The Fourth, and final, General Session includes the announcement of the winners of the Individual award, proficiency winners and top 3 CDE teams as well as State FFA Secretary Sydney Gambrell and State President Kylie Cathcart's retiring addresses as well as the exciting announcement of the 2020-2021 State Officer team.

The year 2020 has provided some challenges for the SC FFA Association and the state officer team. Challenges that were met with enthusiasm and determination. A special thank you to our 2019-20 state officers and a commendation of a job especially well done!

FFA First Virtual Convention

By Kylie Cathcart



FFA members, advisors and supporters, the South Carolina FFA Association is making history with the first virtual S.C. FFA State Convention, and our state officer team could not be more excited. We have worked tirelessly to prepare and plan for this exciting opportunity. This year's convention, full of unique and engaging content for all, is a totally

unique experience. It features a week of awards, guest speakers and workshops, and can be experienced right at home.

Additionally, the virtual convention will contain retiring addresses from our current state officers as they hang up their blue jackets as well as the announcement of the new 2020-2021 South Carolina FFA State Officers.

Even a pandemic can not hold back the S.C. FFA Association. While our state officer team misses terribly the interaction with the members of the S.C. FFA association, it was truly a unique experience to hold our biggest celebration of the year, the 93rd South Carolina FFA Convention with you virtually.

Batesburg-Leesville FFA Host Annual

By Libby Templeton

The Batesburg-Leesville FFA Chapter hosted the annual Miss FFA pageant at the Lexington School District Three Fine Arts Center on March 13, 2020. The event marked the 11th year that the Batesburg-Leesville FFA has hosted the pageant. A total of 76 sophomores, juniors and seniors from around the state competed for the title. All of the contestants were judged on their applications, interviews and evening wear. From these combined scores, the judges selected the top 10 semifinalists, who then answered an on-stage question pertaining to the FFA and had their placement determined by the judges. In addition to the crown, sash, flowers and plaque, the winner receives a \$500 scholarship provided by Ag South Farm Credit.

Congratulations to **Hayden Bennett** from the Ashley Ridge FFA Chapter on winning the title of Miss FFA 2020 and the scholarship from Ag South Farm Credit.

Miss FFA Pageant



Left to right: 2020 Mr. FFA Winner Lee Padgett from the Pelion FFA Chapter, Miss FFA 2020 Hayden Bennett and 2019 Miss FFA, Sydney Gambrell.



Miss FFA Pageant winners

Left to right: Amanda Baker, LR5 FFA, Katie Shirley, Pendleton FFA, Sydney Gambrell, 2019 Miss FFA, Hayden Bennett, 2020 Miss FFA, Meliah Washington, Keenan FFA and Victoria Hudson, Pickens FFA.

Pelion Student Lee Padgett Named 'Mr. FFA In South Carolina'

By South Carolina Agri-News Service, John W. Parris Director



Lee T. Padgett, a member of the Pelion High School FFA Chapter, was named 'Mr. FFA In South Carolina' during the recent statewide 'Mr. FFA Scholarship Competition' hosted by the Pendleton FFA Chapter at Pendleton High School, reports John W. Parris, director of the South Carolina Agri-News Service.

Lee defeated 32 other candidates representing FFA chapters throughout South

Carolina in the competition and was awarded a \$500 scholarship by the historic Pendleton Farmers Society.

The competition was based on a wide assortment of assessments including a thorough application that detailed Lee's FFA involvement and his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Program as an agricultural education student, an essay and a series of intensive interviews dealing with agriculture issues. Once he advanced to the finals, he was required to answer questions about agriculture while on stage.

"The son of Trevor and Penny Padgett of the Fairview Community, Lee is currently serving as president of the Pelion FFA Chapter," Parris said. "He will be attending Clemson University in the fall to major in Agricultural Mechanization and Business."

Lee's FFA advisors are Frank R. Stover Jr., and Jesse Zeaser, agri-science and technology instructors at Pelion High School.



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SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURE

WE WILL MISS YOU THIS SUMMER, But FFA Camp Will be Back!



By Frank Saldana, Associate State Director of Agricultural Education

Summer camp has been a part of the SC FFA Association for over 80 years. At one time, the SC FFA Association had camps at the beach, in the midlands and in the upstate. However, in the 1950s all camping programs were consolidated and held at a “state of the art” new facility in Cherry Grove beach. The facility is

still in use today and has hosted a summer camping program every year since 1957.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic in our nation this year, after much thoughtful consideration and evaluating the circumstances, a decision was by the SC FFA Board of Director to cancel the SC FFA summer camping programs for the month of June. The board based its decision primarily on the health and safety of the students who would

be in attendance, as well as the uncertainty of what restrictions could be placed on such camping programs. In addition, after surveying schools, it was determined that most school districts had placed a restriction on travel during the summer, which would hinder attendance.

It is the hope of the SC FFA Association that the camp will be up and running in the very near future, possibly even in time for Leadership Camp scheduled for late July.

The SC FFA Camp also has scheduled camps to be run throughout the fall, winter and spring of the 2020-21 school year. If conditions allow, programs will be held in areas to include: **Greenhand Camp, Equine Camp, Forestry Camp and Outdoor Recreation Camp.** And, of course, if all goes well, summer camp will return in 2021.

We are certainly living in uncharted times in our state, nation and world. Changes have come which have caused inconveniences, which we all regret, but understand the necessity. But as they say, this too shall pass. We will miss you at summer camp this year, but **WE WILL BE BACK!**



FFA Camping Opportunities for 2020-21

By Frank Saldana

If you were to ask most FFA members what some of their greatest memories are of their years in the FFA, you would find quite a few that would list FFA Camp right up there at the top of most memorable experiences. Unfortunately, the pandemic that swept across South Carolina and the rest of the world put a damper on the 2020 FFA summer camping programs, robbing students of some exciting times in Myrtle Beach.

However, do not be dismayed. There are more camping options on the way! The 2020-21 camping program will present many opportunities for students to enjoy the FFA Camp, the Grand Strand and some great fellowship with friends.

Providing conditions allow, the following camping programs are scheduled for 2020-21:

- **Greenhand Camp** – this camp provides a chance for new members to explore all that FFA has to offer with workshops on leadership and mock CDEs and to meet members from other chapters.
- **Outdoor Recreation Camp** – this camp explores opportunities and careers within the outdoor recreation sector. Activities have included introduction to SCUBA, high ropes, firearms safety and presentations by industry professionals.
- **Equine Camp** – this is a hands-on educational look at various aspects of the equine industry, horse care, health needs and careers within the equine industry. Students also have the opportunity to practice their horsemanship skills with trail and beach horseback rides.
- **Marine Fishery Camp** – this camp explores themes of the maritime ecosystem with a focus on salt water fish. Students learn about salt water habitat, conservation, safety, regulation and experience a variety of saltwater recreational fishing activities.
- **Forestry Camp** – this is hosted through a partnership with S.C. Forestry Department. It provides students with an overview of the industry, with workshops and hands-on demonstrations including controlled burning, timber cruising and grading, and careers in forestry, conservation and safety.

For each of these camps, while learning is paramount, what is camp without a whole lot of fun? Don't expect to come just to sit in a classroom. These camps will be hands on, providing students with once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. And just like summer camp, students will have the opportunity to enjoy some of what the Myrtle Beach area has to offer.

So, if you missed summer camp, all isn't lost. Make plans now to participate in one of the exciting programs offered by the SC FFA Association at the camp in Myrtle Beach later in the year.

To check out all SC FFA Camping programs and to register, go to: <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/scaged/camp/programs.html>.





Feeding the World. **Finding Your Place.**



Brodie had always loved the outdoors, plants — and FFA. When he came to Clemson he found that all his interests could come together in one even bigger passion — feeding the world.

At Clemson, Brodie conducted research on plant pathology with professors who shared his goals. He then applied that research to the campus' Tiger Gardens where he also taught nutrition and sustainability. Brodie is now in graduate school, with plans to travel to third-world countries to help them solve their food crises.

It's a big task. But with knowledge, enthusiasm and the support of his mentors, Brodie is up to the challenge.

Learn more about Brodie's story at
clemson.edu/moments.

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Ridge Spring-Monetta FFA Gets a New Spark for Its Old Mission

By Michael Crim, Agriculture Teacher – Ridge Spring-Monetta High School

The Ridge Spring-Monetta High School building has seen little change in the past 60 years ... that is, until now. A new facility, which is slated to be a K-12 campus, will be open to students in the fall of 2020. The new building is built on the same 85-acre campus as the current facility, which is scheduled to be demolished.

The new building will be a state-of-the-art facility that will meet the needs of all students in preparing them for careers in today's world.

The agricultural education program will also benefit from the new facility. In addition to updated facilities such as a state of the art shop, classroom and greenhouse, the agriculture facility will also include a modern cannery based on the Crop Stop Kitchen concept developed through a partnership between College of Charleston and Clemson University. The cannery will be used to support the school garden, which will be located on the campus. In addition, the cannery will be utilized to bring community involvement and support to the agriculture program and the school. The community support generated will serve to provide

mentoring programs for the entire K-12 campus. The mentors will show the students the benefits of agriculture to nourish a spark of interest in all students for a career in agriculture.

Ridge Spring-Monetta High School is located in an agricultural community and is rich in its history of supporting the agriculture industry. The new agricultural education facility demonstrates that the school recognizes the importance of the agriculture industry to its community and ensures its desire to provide future leaders in agriculture.



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Keenan is Not Your Typical Agriculture Program

By Troy Helms

When you think about successful agricultural education programs in the state of South Carolina, you probably think of rural schools embedded within hotbeds of agriculture throughout our state. Maybe you are reminded of those programs steeped in tradition with a long history of success that have become generational and a mainstay within the communities in which they thrive. However, agriculture has no boundaries or limits and reaches into every community, school and home from the rural fields of our state to the busy highways and intersections of our biggest cities.

When you walk into the classroom at Keenan High School in Columbia, you see a typical agriculture classroom. Student desks are scattered about the room, bulletin boards on the wall with announcements about upcoming events and school notices, students actively engaged in learning and an instructor teaching, leading and mentoring each one who walks into the classroom. You forget that you are steps away from the busyness of the outside streets and urban homes.

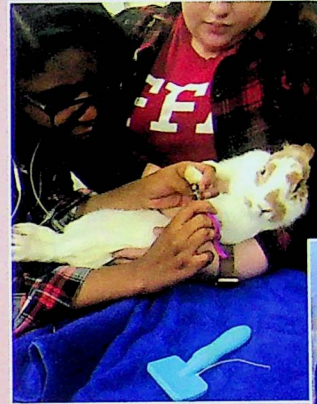
Maria Ausburn, agricultural education teacher, and the students at Keenan High School in a short time have laid the foundation for a successful program for years to come. During this time, the chapter has been recognized as both a Gold and Silver Chapter, been recognized as a 2 Star Chapter on the national level and has produced a state officer candidate. This success has come about because of the students, teacher and administration having a belief and a vision for what it takes to build a successful agricultural education program in the inner city.

Much of the success at Keenan High School can be attributed to the willingness to build an agricultural program based on need and interests. Since Keenan opened an animal science pathway, the interest of students has skyrocketed and many have gone on to build a career based on what they learned while a student in the program. Multiple internships are offered and acquired by the students within the agricultural pathway. The administration has supported this endeavor by building a grooming salon that is now in operation to help teach and train the students. This success hasn't gone unnoticed outside of the school walls as the program was featured on WIS News, a local Columbia television station, and articles in their local newspapers. Also, Ms. Ausburn was recognized as ACTE New Teacher of the Year.

While most of us would not think about Keenan High School, embedded in the city of our South Carolina state capitol, as a thriving opportunity for agricultural education, Ausburn and the students at Keenan have shown that maybe we should change our mindset. Agricultural education provides so many educational opportunities for our students and communities that are the basis of our health, well-being and everyday life. It has no boundaries and no barriers. The Keenan High School agriculture program proves that success can't be measured by where you live or by what background you come from. Success is built on vision and belief and opportunities provided to all students and meeting the needs of each individual community.



Various agriculture programs at Keenan High School.



Agriculture Teachers in High Demand

By Billy Keels, State Director of Agricultural Education

The Agriculture Education program in South Carolina has been growing substantially over the past 10 years. Each year, programs are added at schools which previously did not offer agriculture. In addition, existing programs are expanding as they add additional agriculture teachers to accommodate the growing demand due to enrollment growth.

A good example of program growth can be found at the Center for Advanced Technical Studies in the Lexington-Richland 5 School District. The program was established to house a single ag teacher with the hope that an agriculture program would work in this highly rated school district. And did it ever. The program has grown in a few short years to a three-teacher ag program and boasts the highest enrollment of any program housed at the Center.

While program growth is certainly a good thing, filling the teaching vacancies that are created can be a challenge, especially considering there is a nationwide shortage of agriculture teachers. According to the

alternative certification methods to fill all of the vacancies. However, even with alternative certifications, NAAE reports that, in 2018 there were 61 teaching positions across the nation that went unfilled.

That is potentially 61 agricultural education programs that could be shut down due to the lack of a teacher.

While South Carolina has done a pretty good job of finding teachers, filling positions has been a challenge. Meeting the demand for teachers has been accomplished through an outstanding job of recruiting and preparing students by the Agricultural Education program at Clemson University, which is the only teacher educator program in South Carolina that certifies teachers in Agriculture. However,

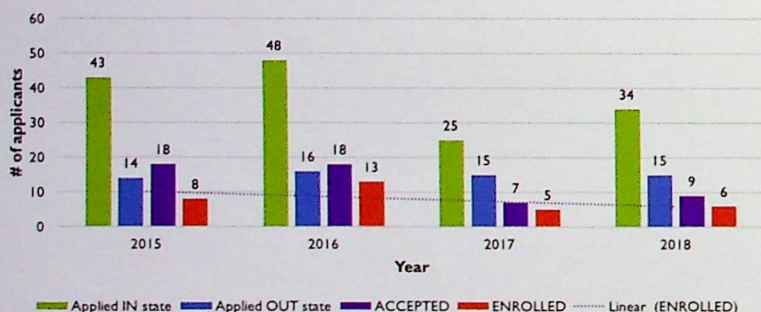
even with utilizing all students graduating from Clemson, there is still a shortage. For example, in 2018, there were 15 graduates from the Clemson Ag Ed program and there were 22 Ag Teaching positions to be filled in South Carolina. And of those 15 graduates, only 11 pursued a teaching position in South Carolina. The shortage was met with the use of alternatively certified teachers through the PACE program, as well as an aggressive recruitment of potential teaching candidates from other states.

Agricultural education teacher recruitment efforts in South Carolina have been very aggressive. The S.C. Association

of Agricultural Educators has a TAG program (or tagged to Teach Ag Ed), where they identify students with an interest in teaching. The Agricultural Education Program Team at Clemson also actively recruits teachers from

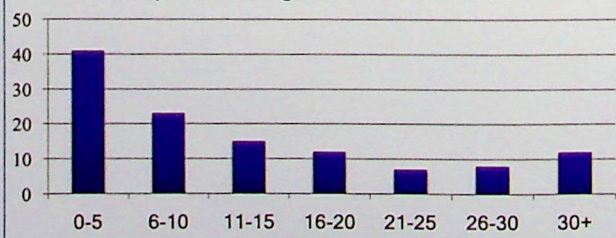
Through all the data, one thing is clear and that is that agricultural education is popular and is a growing program

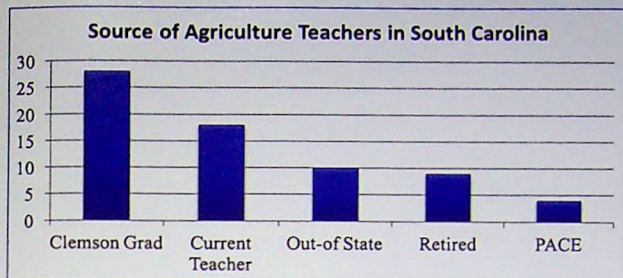
Agricultural Education Program FRESHMAN Enrollment Data



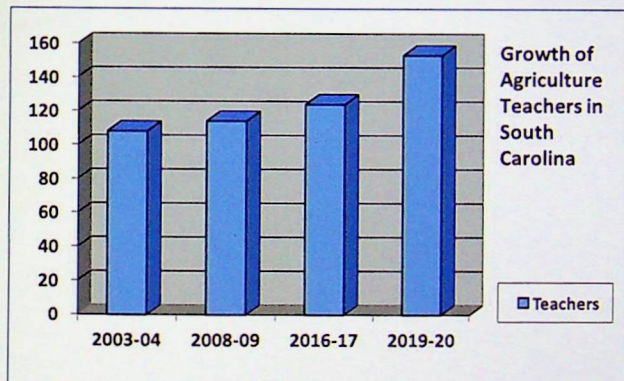
National Association of Agricultural Educators, there are currently over 13,000 middle and high school ag teachers in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. This same data showed that nationwide in 2018, there over 1,000 teaching positions open nationwide. Most of these programs are filled with graduates of the Agricultural Education programs housed in colleges and universities across the nation. However, the demand for teachers is exceeding the supply. In 2018, NAAE reports that there were 873 Agricultural Education graduates. You can do the math and see that there are far more job openings than there are candidates to fill them. Add in the fact that not all Agricultural Education graduates choose to teach, this creates quite a shortage. It has left many states to find

Years Experience of Ag Teachers in South Carolina





other states, while also trying to connect schools with vacancies with those students who are preparing to graduate in the Ag Ed program at Clemson and are pursuing a teaching position. Another key initiative was the Ag Ed Summit, held in Clemson in the fall of 2019. Clemson University Agriculture Education faculty, joined with the Clemson Agricultural Education Program Team to bring together Clemson faculty, Clemson Ag Ed Staff, Technical College representatives, Clemson Agricultural Education students current Agricultural Teachers,



representatives from the alternative certification program at the SC Department of Education, the CAFLS recruitment office, and others to examine the problem, and come up with some possible solutions. In addition, South Carolina has been a NAAE STAR State since 2017. Support from NAAE sponsors (CHS Foundation, Corvetea Agriculture, Growth Energy and BASF) is provided for the state to focus on Ag Ed teacher recruitment and retention efforts. The grant provides funding each year for teaching recruitment and retention strategies.

Through all the data, one thing is clear and that is that agricultural education is a popular and growing program. In 2004, there were just over 100 ag teachers in South Carolina. Today there are 153.

TEACH AG

While the agriculture teacher shortage creates a challenge, the demand for agricultural educators has created many opportunities. The best way to meet this challenge is for young people to realize the advantages of pursuing a career in agricultural education and identify the steps to reach that goal. With most ag teachers in South Carolina receiving an extended contract, salaries are very competitive, and higher than many jobs. In addition, you have to factor in the fact that a position will pretty much be waiting on any graduate certified to teach agriculture. So, if you are a young person who is planning to attend college and desires a career major which almost guarantees you a career upon graduation, you might want to strongly consider seeking a degree in Agricultural Education. Further, you need to notify your teacher of your interest so that he or she can work with you to assist in reaching your goal.

The future is certainly bright for the Agricultural Education program in South Carolina. Hopefully enterprising students will realize the potential and set a goal to become an agriculture teacher.



Ag Ed Graduation class of 2020 are (l to r) Katie Martin, Allie Camak, Marley Long, Morgan Davis, Madison Huddy, Elizabeth Shaw, Keomba McNeely, Audrey Cutlip, Austin Cathcart, Brooke Feder, Jacob Cathcart, Jillian Mitchell, Joey McCannon, and Halie Pearson



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